

Albert George Walker (690)



Albert George Walker from Parkham Tasmania was only 20-years- old when he travelled abroad to fight in World War One.



He was part of the 3rd Division that was raised in Australia early in 1916. The 40th Battalion was Tasmania's contribution to the strength of the division, and it joined the Victorian-raised 37th, 38th and 39th Battalions to form the 10th Brigade.

Albert enlisted only seven months after his big brother John William Walker on the 22nd of March 1916. He left onboard the HMAT A35 Berrima on the 1st of July 1916¹.

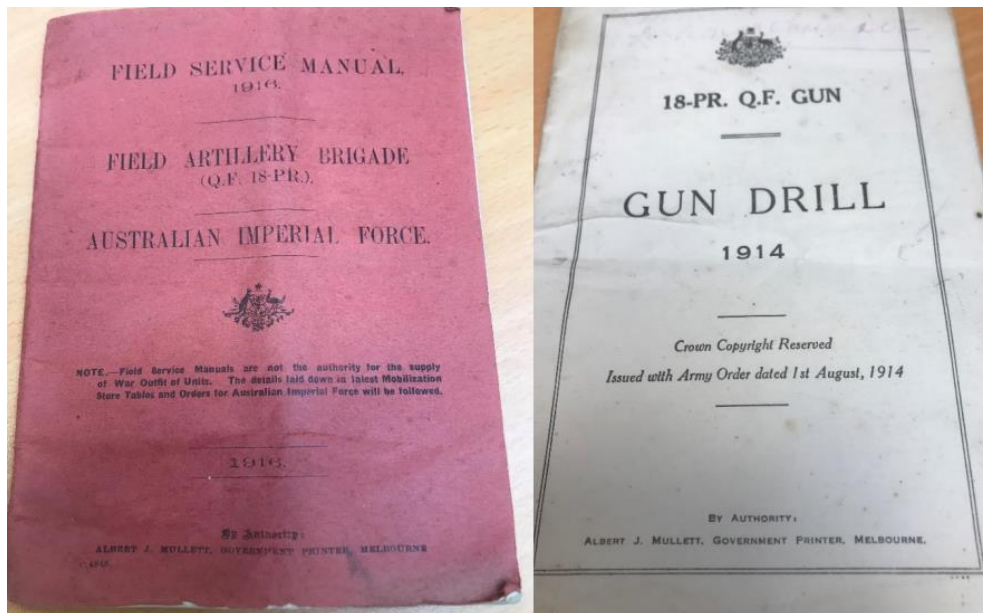


HMAT A35 Berrima

No doubt seeking adventure and feeling a sense of patriotic duty after reading about the battle at Gallipoli and in France, he arrived in England on the 22nd of August 1916. The 40th Battalion went into training on the Salisbury Plains at the Lark Hill training camp. 02.00. A period of intense training followed as the battalion was prepared for trench warfare on the Western Front. Finally, in November 1916 the 3rd Division, including the 40th Battalion, was transferred to France.²

¹ Australian War Memorial, '40th Australian Infantry Battalion, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U51480>. Accessed 14/7/2024.

² Australian War Memorial, 'Training for War Third Division, A.I.F Lark Hill 1916, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/MSS2081>. Accessed 14/7/2024



Training Booklets Soldiers uses as the theory component part of their training.

No record remains but we can only wonder if Alfred enjoyed the opportunity while in England to look around his surroundings and venture to historical sites such as Stonehenge.

He proceeded to France by 23rd November 1916. He became a part of the 40th Battalion. Little did he know he would be required to later fight in the battle at Passchendaele³. On the 31st of January 1917 he was admitted to 9th Field Ambulance with diarrhea. This was most probably caused by the trench conditions. He was then discharged to duty again on the 1st of February 1917. On the 7th of June 1917 he fought in the Battle of Messines where he was wounded with gunshot wounds to the left arm. He was admitted to 12th Field Ambulance, but his wounds must have been light as he returned to duty on the Battalion on the 11th of June 1917. The following month he was promoted to Lance Corporal and then in October 1917 he was promoted to Temporary Corporal.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P05769.001

³ National Army Museum, (2024) 'Battle of Passchendaele' <http://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/battle-passchendaele>. Accessed 14/7/2024.

D Company 40th Battalion, taken at Epagne.



Group portrait of 28 men of Machine Gun Section, 40th Battalion, who embarked from Hobart, Tasmania, on 1 July 1916, aboard HMAT Berrima (A35).

Albert's introduction to war proved costly, with the battalion losing over 350 men killed or wounded during the Battle of Messines. What he did not know that was that this was just a prelude to the intensely ferocious fighting that was to come.

The 40th Battalion next major effort came four months later during the Battle of Broodseinde Ridge on 4 October, where one of the battalion's soldiers, Sergeant Lewis McGee 'B' Company, performed the deeds for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. History recalls how the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Australian Divisions captured Broodseinde Ridge on 4th October 1917⁴. It was a vital victory. But then it began to rain. Five days later the 2nd Australian Division suffered heavily in a further attack in the mud. Finally, on 12th October, another attack, involving the 3rd Division assisted by the 4th, was made against the village of Passchendaele atop the main ridge. In the face of heavy fire, the men fought in the mire while struggling to keep up with their artillery barrages. Ground was taken but it could not be held. In wretched conditions, with casualties mounting at an appalling rate, the Australians had to fall back. The troops were finally exhausted and could do no more; by 15th November they handed over to the Canadians.

I have often thought that many a youngster when he was hit out there on the Passchendaele heights ... and he knew that the end had come – must have thought to himself: "well at least they'll remember me in Australia". C.E.W. Bean⁵

On the 12th of October 1917 Albert Walker was killed during this failed attack on Passchendaele, combined with their losses at Broodseinde Ridge, the 40th Battalion suffered 248 casualties during the fighting. A day marked with sadness for many.

⁴ Australian War Memorial, 2024, Sergeant Lewis McGee' <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P11040198> Accessed 14/7/2024.

⁵Australian War Memorial, 2007, Battle of Passchendaele (Third Ypres), <http://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/battle-of-passchendaele-third-ypres> Accessed 14/7/2024

Albert Walker can now be found at Tyne Cot Cemetery (Plot XL, Row D, Grave No 24), near Passchendaele, in Belgium⁶. It is difficult to know at what point in the day Albert was killed.

Albert's death marks a life extinguished, a battlefield statistic one of 275,000 British Soldiers killed in the Battle of Passchendaele. Albert George Walker won a British War Medal and, Victory Medal⁷. He, however, did not return to Tasmania as his brother did a decorated war veteran. He did not return at all. Instead, his family were left wondering and grieving the life of a loved one. An innocent and young life which had such potential ahead of him.

⁶ World War One Cemeteries, 2024 Tyne Cot Roll of Honour, [Tyne Cot Cemetery, Roll of Honour - N-Z - WW1 Cemeteries.com - A photographic guide to over 4000 military cemeteries and memorials](https://www.wwo1cemeteries.com). Accessed 14/7/2024

⁷ Australian War Memorial (2024) Roll of Honour, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1669451> accessed 14/7/2024

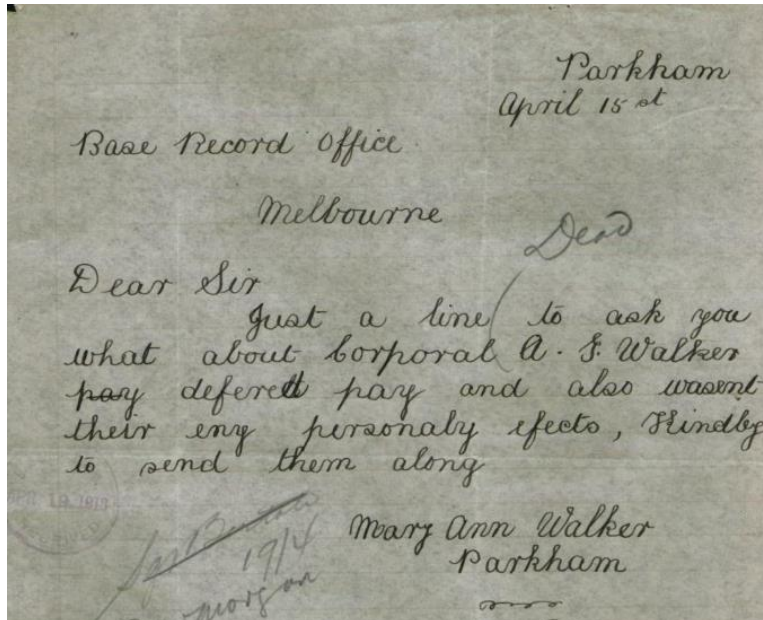


Conditions at Battle of Passchendaele 1917

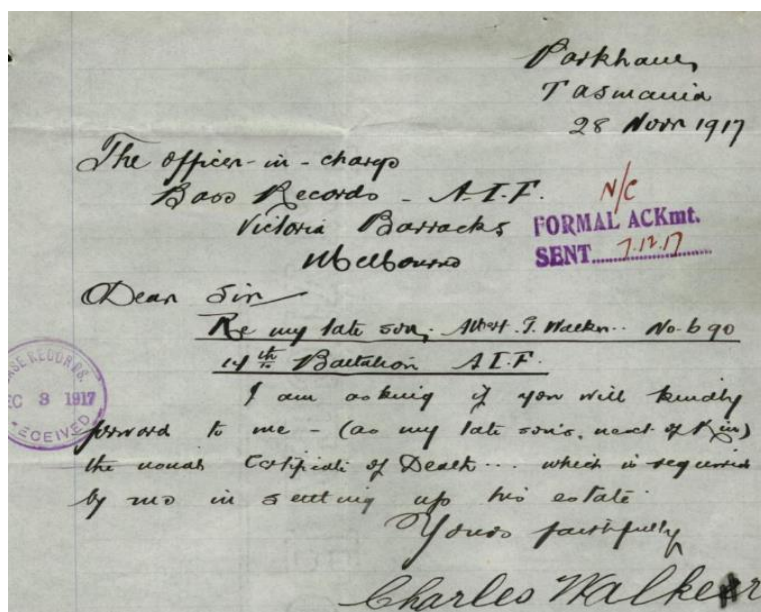
Mary and Charles Walker would have welcomed John William home with immense gratitude knowing only too well the true reality of war for their other son Albert George Walker.

In the significance that was World War One, Albert leaves behind no extraordinary record, he is not mentioned in dispatches and is survived by his service record alone. His mother and father wrote to

the Department of Defence and requested Alberts meagre possessions those that were his alone, a token to hold onto for a grieving mother⁸.



⁸ National Archives of Australia (2024) Walker Albert George : SERN 690 : POB Parkham TAS : POE Hobart TAS : NOK F Walker Charles' National Archives of Australia (2024) Walker Albert George : SERN 690 : POB Parkham TAS : POE Hobart TAS : NOK F Walker Charles'



What would have become of Albert had he survived is unknown. His brother returns home alive. Albert body, however, never returns to Tasmania. Instead, he remains on the Western Front in the Tyne Cot Cemetery.

Paul Keating in his 1993 Remembrance Day address, when referencing the Tomb of the Unknown soldier, sums up the life of an ordinary individual who heard and responded to the call for arms and paid the ultimate sacrifice. This address gives a message that they were not ordinary..... and reminding all of us that their sacrifice was purposeful and that there is faith was enough for all⁹.

⁹ Paul Keating 1993, Remembrance Day address, 'Lest we forget': Remembering Australian Soldiers who died in foreign lands', <http://www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/speeches/keating-remembrance-day-1993>, Accessed 14/7/2024

Reference List

Australian War Memorial, 2007, Battle of Passchendaele (Third Ypres), <http://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/battle-of-passchendaele-third-ypres> Accessed 14/7/2024

Australian War Memorial (2024) Roll of Honor, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1669451> accessed 14/7/2024

Australian War Memorial, '40th Australian Infantry Battalion, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U51480> . Accessed 14/7/2024.

Australian War Memorial, 2024, Sergeant Lewis McGee' <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P11040198> Accessed 14/7/2024.

Australian War Memorial, 'Training for War Third Division, A.I.F Lark Hill 1916, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/MSS2081>. Accessed 14/7/2024

National Archives of Australia (2024) *Walker Albert George : SERN 690 : POB Parkham TAS : POE Hobart TAS : NOK F Walker Charles'* National Archives of Australia (2024) *Walker Albert George : SERN 690 : POB Parkham TAS : POE Hobart TAS : NOK F Walker Charles'*

National Army Museum, (2024) 'Battle of Passchendaele' <http://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/battle-passchendaele>. Accessed 14/7/2024.

World War One Cemeteries, 2024 Tyne Cot Roll of Honour, [Tyne Cot Cemetery, Roll of Honour - N-Z - WW1 Cemeteries.com - A photographic guide to over 4000 military cemeteries and memorials](http://www.tyne-cot-cemetery.com). Accessed 14/7/2024